



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

AUGUST 2018 VOLUME 9 ISSUE 8

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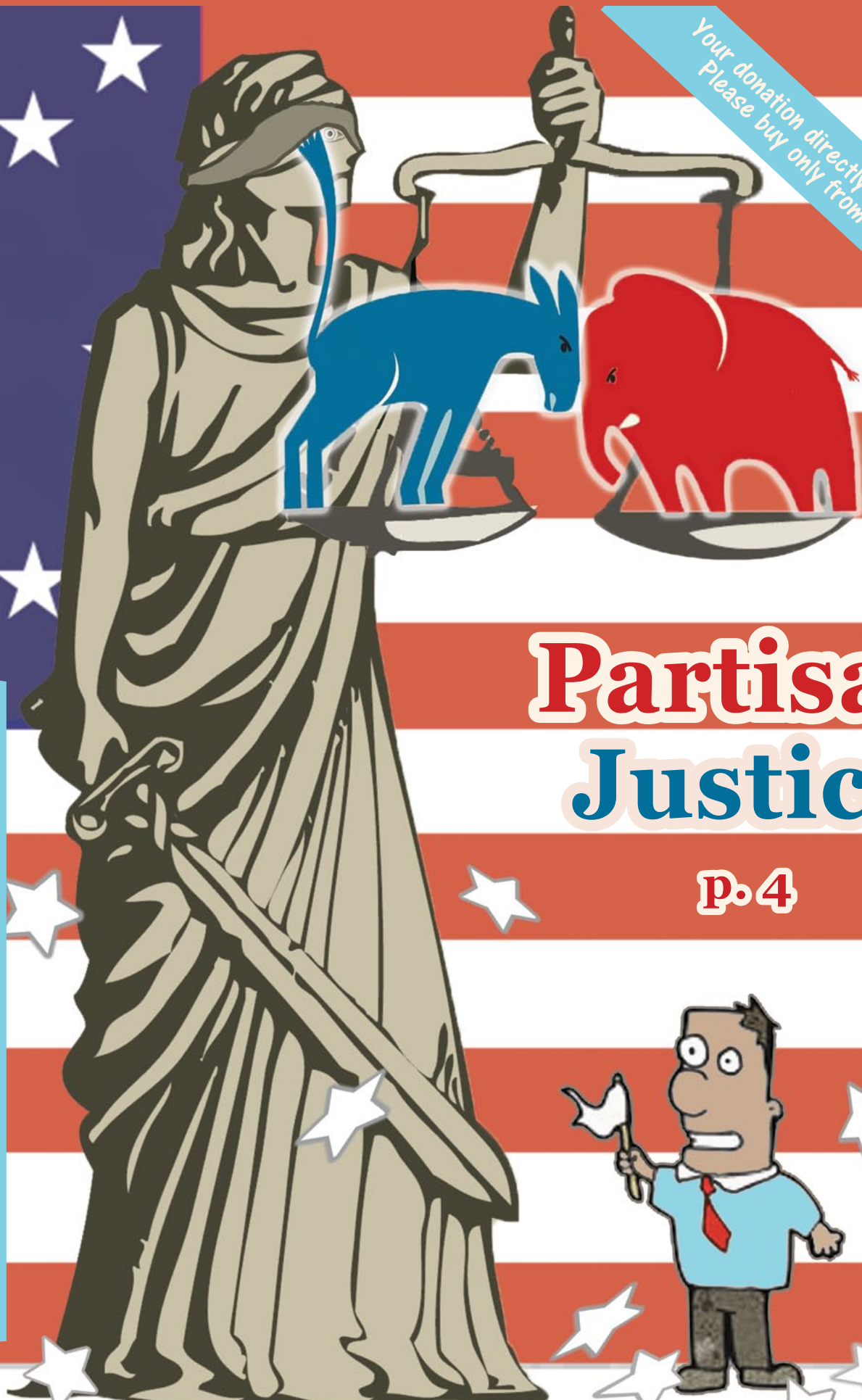
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Medicaid work requirements: Will Michigan pony up for applicable job training?



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

Now that the State of Michigan is imposing work requirements for those deemed as able-bodied Medicaid recipients, and is prepared to spend more on enforcement than will be realized in savings, it is time to also fund work opportunities for those who now must work or volunteer 20 hours per week for at least nine months per year.

There is often a good reason why those folks are not employed. Many who have not been approved for Social Security Insurance for disability are fragile in ways that make them unreliable employees. Migraine headaches, arthritis, a needy child or parent or similar conditions cause frequent absences that are disruptive in many business environments. Others never make it past the screening process because of a criminal record or marginal literacy, or because

conditions like anxiety or autism make interviewers uneasy.

It is easy to think that the non-profit world will benefit from the unpaid work these people will be forced to provide to receive Medicaid benefits. The reality is that many of the conditions that limit them as employees also limit them as volunteers.

A wonderful woman who falls into this category volunteered for a couple of years with Groundcover. We loved having her around but could never really count on her to cover a shift at the office. She would frequently have to cancel because of health problems and appointments to address them and to get and maintain the few benefits she and her children received. Then she had to move and the new location was two long bus rides away. If the first bus was late and she missed the connection, she'd be an hour late. That happened often in the winter.

She faces the same challenges getting to her appointments, food banks, stores and so on, making survival pretty close to a full-time job. Adding a 20-hour per week volunteering requirement will likely push her to the necessity of getting on disability.

On the other hand, if she was paid a decent wage for working even 30 hours, she could probably move closer to the bus station and dispense with scouring the food banks for diabetes-friendly foods for her family. She might well then even get a full-time, flexible-hour job in the private sector, especially if she could then afford internet access from her house.

So many of the jobs which don't require a reliable physical presence – blogging, telemarketing, computer programming

– all need reliable connectivity. If the state is serious about getting those who could work back into the workforce, they need to provide a realistic bridge to getting there.

A large contribution could be made by developing job-sharing techniques for local and state government office work that could then be adapted to the private sector. For instance, a pool of people could be employed to answer phones, prepare newsletters and file. With several scheduled at a time, at least one would usually be there to cover time-sensitive tasks like answering phones, though a traditional employee would have to be prepared to step in on those occasions where none of the Medicaid-pool workers made it. Landscaping is another field that could work, as is sorting recyclables.

People who show up and work hard deserve to be paid enough to be free from dependency and its morass of regulations. It may well take two or more years for people to build the resources they need to move to conventional employment.

Some never will make that jump. They might survive in a wilderness setting but have personality disorders that prevent them from getting along with others, a basic requirement for any kind of commerce. These are probably also the people who social workers find most unpleasant to deal with, and for whom the general public most resents providing benefits. Consider, though, that these people would change if they could. But they can't, so someone is going to have to be paid to find them solitary tasks

and supervise them. If the state wants non-profits to assume this burden, the state should at least provide monetary support to make this feasible.

Most of the people I know who qualify for welfare benefits find them distasteful, at best. Beyond the stigma, an intrusive government presence becomes part of the recipients' life and the effort to secure them is hardly worth the increasingly stingy return. Many simply do not accept them.

The real beneficiaries of the Medicaid expansion are those who pay for insurance or medical care. Impoverished people get care at hospital emergency rooms, whether they can pay for it or not. The cost of unpaid visits are added to the fees charged to those who do pay. Emergency room visits are expensive, especially when a condition has escalated.

Since the expansion, hospital social workers have been enrolling all patients who can't pay their bills onto Medicaid and instructing them on how to get preventive primary care services. This is now starting to change the way people who have grown up in poverty understand health care.

It is unfortunate that this behavior-changing policy wasn't given a chance to take hold before additional demands were added. But since the state added the requirement to work or volunteer, it is incumbent on that same body to make it practical for all people to reap the rewards of working.

LETTER to the EDITOR

Trump reviving class conflict

Since President Trump always portrays America in an extremely idealized version, things like class conflict are routinely denied. Thus, the president can propose deep cuts in social safety net programs with minimal opposition from his base. Thousands of real people will be hurt if his budget cuts are enacted, and the "new" balanced budget amendment would make things even worse. Electing a Democratic majority to Congress this year is the only sure way to prevent this looming disaster. POOR PEOPLE ARE NOT EX-PENDABLE!

Paul Lambert

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#groundcovernews

f t i

SUGGESTIONS

A moment of fullness



by Rev Dr.
Martha Brunell
Groundcover
Contributor

My column for the July 2014 issue of Groundcover News was about the beginnings of our Monarch Waystation/Prairie Habitat Restoration Project here at Mayfield United Church of Christ in Sycamore, Ill. That summer after the strenuous and long winter of the polar vortex, the ground was frozen much later than usual.

On Memorial Day weekend, we laid down rolls and rolls of heavy black plastic in an inviting spiral shape around the fire pit that occupies the center of the parsonage backyard. The plastic was an organic alternative to chemicals; it was necessary to kill the grass where the waystation would be.

For the next two months, I was engaged in a daily challenge with the ever-present prairie wind. The plastic was anchored in place with over a hundred bricks, countless heavy pieces of wood from the outdoor woodpile, lawn furniture turned upside down, an old bench, and a large, overturned wheelbarrow. Each morning I repositioned plastic that the wind had pried up overnight. When the plastic was finally removed, we covered our garden spiral with 28

yards of mulch. Thirteen small shrubs were planted that fall.

The following spring we began our battle with the bunnies who loved to chew young plants to the ground. Twelve of the original 13 shrubs have survived, growing tall and reaching toward one another these last four years. The garden has filled out with five varieties of milkweed – the host plant for the monarchs – coneflowers, little bluestem and prairie dropseed grasses, asters, compass plants, bee balm, coreopsis, clover and other prairie natives.

A pollinator box, what some call a bee box, was built from locally-sourced, recycled materials in 2016. For nine months after that I used the box in presentations from Iowa to North Carolina. Hundreds of people from all over the country learned about habitat threats to the monarchs' survival and what they could do to help reverse this devastating trend. Those same people wrote earth prayers on small pieces of paper that were rolled up and placed in the pollinator box holes and tunnels. Those papers provide insulation for the bees who seek shelter during the cold months and nesting material for the eggs they will lay there.

I am writing this column the day after the 11th Annual DeKalb County Master Gardeners' Garden Walk. We were one of the eight garden stops on the 2018 walk, which was spread out over three towns and some of the rural land

in between. One hundred and sixty people visited our quiet and peaceful waystation in the country designed for the wellbeing of monarchs, other pollinators and human beings too.

Two monarch caterpillars were spotted and helped to tell the story as they munched away on milkweed leaves. Monarchs and other butterflies flitted in the air. Three baby robins took their fledging leap and tumbled to the ground from their nest in a linden tree. The waystation resembled a very colorful congregation with so many blooming hues.

Visitors were invited to come back in the fall when our recycled plastic benches are in place. Hundreds of area people have joined us over the last nine months to collect 800 pounds of plastic caps, lids, and pill bottles. A children's recycling project in Indiana will convert this huge mound of plastic into three four-foot benches to extend the garden's welcome.

Our waystation hope has always pointed in several directions. First of all, we have wanted to recognize our interdependence with the pollinators and make a positive contribution to their survival and thriving. Secondly, we have sought to educate others and encourage them to engage in actions that will reach across species and restore habitat for our common welfare. And finally, we have intended to create an earth sanctuary, a public outdoor space where others can come to pause, rest and nurture their beings.

Yesterday was a moment of completion along the way. This is a long-term effort, not unlike the long-term commitment of Groundcover News. It's so good to have moments like the garden walk to celebrate and be nourished by where we are on the journey. If you ever get to the rural outskirts of Sycamore, Ill., I know a beautiful garden waystation you might stop and see. You are always welcome here.

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Partisan Justice



by **Martin Stolzenberg**
Groundcover Contributor

Justice is supposed to be blind, but we are increasingly finding she is peeking from behind her blindfold.

When our Founding Fathers set up our branches of government they wisely decided on three branches: two would be political – the Executive and Legislative – and one judicial – the Courts. That pretty much worked for over 200 years, but now is floundering a bit. This is because the courts, even going all the way up to the Supreme Court, have become increasingly partisan. We are winding up with three political branches of government. That is not a good thing.

Even the esteemed Supreme Court justices now vote in partisan blocks and are very clear about it. Indeed, Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg has openly stated, “We [liberals] have made a concerted effort to speak with one voice in important cases.” In other words, she is saying that they base their opinions on preferred policy choices and not the Constitution.

In recent years, we have seen the right wing of the Republican Party exerting its power like never before. Early in 2016, Associate Justice Antonin Scalia, the foremost conservative-leaning justice, died. President Obama was in a

position to appoint a moderate justice, which might have swung the balance of power on the Supreme Court for a generation. But Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell denied proceeding with the nomination, using a ploy that there was an upcoming presidential election – which was still almost a year away. This was an unheard-of excuse.

Sure enough, with the election of President Trump, the Republicans (who still hold a majority in Congress) were able to quickly appoint a member of the Court who will likely follow in the footsteps of Scalia – Neil Gorsuch.

Now, with the looming retirement of middle-of-the-roader Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, the Republicans are looking to replace him with Appeals Judge Brett Kavanaugh, whose claim to fame (and arguably his greatest appeal to Trump) comes from one Kavanaugh opinion: a sitting president shouldn't be subject to impeachment. The Supreme Court Justice nominee reasons that the president has so much to do in running the country that defending himself would be a distraction.

Of course, not everyone buys that logic – including the Founding Fathers, themselves. After all, it's in the Constitution. Article II, Section 4 states that “The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.” Such offenses, among many others, are precisely what President Trump and his team have been under investigation for since even before he took office.

Such are the divisive factors operating in the Supreme Court today. While the situation overwhelms

ingly favors the Republicans at this time, there is little doubt the Democrats would also carry out similar maneuvers if they were in a position to do so.

What makes the judicial branch and its courts so important in our lives? Well, the Supreme Court hears about 100 cases a year. While they usually are of great import, this is peanuts compared to what the state courts decide. There are trial courts, courts of appeal and state supreme courts. The state courts decide over 100 million cases a year.

Of course, about 40 million of these involve driving-related offenses.

Courts have also become more involved in religion, technology and medicine. Businesses now operate on a global scale within highly competitive situations where partisans demand redress through the courts. The Supreme Court ultimately gets involved in many of these decisions but they are often initially visited by the state courts.

It's hard to think of a facet of life where the courts aren't increasingly involved in our lives. In particular, since the Bush v. Gore election in 2000, state courts have gotten more involved in elections of every type. In effect, they are acting as the judges of our political system.

So we increasingly face the issue, how do judges decide politically sensitive cases on the basis of their merits rather than their partisan loyalties attached to the situation? Courts now sometimes decide how elections tilt through gerrymandering and voter suppression cases, and that can have major consequences in the political landscape for years to come in shaping public policy and who possesses political power.

It's not uncommon now for judges to decide cases where the outcome favors one political party or another. Under these conditions one would be hard-pressed to think that there isn't a partisan tinge to some of their rulings.

see **PARTISAN**, page 5



Important local elections on August 7

by **The CivCity Initiative**
civcity.org

An important local election is on tap for Tuesday, Aug. 7. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. that day. This is a primary election, so voters must choose the ballot for either the Democratic Party, Republican Party or Libertarian Party. The winners of these primary elections will face off in the Nov. 6 general election.

Citizens of Washtenaw County will be casting their votes for a number of important offices and initiatives. State-wide, these include races for Governor, U.S. Representative and U.S. Senator, State Representative and State Senator. Locally, races will be on the ballot for each district's Washtenaw County Commissioner, Ann Arbor mayor and councilmembers in each of Ann Arbor's five wards. Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor

and several other communities and school districts in Washtenaw County have Aug. 7 ballot proposals. Check Michigan.gov/Vote to find what's on your ballot and to locate your polling site.

Prominent on the ballot in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township is a ballot proposal for the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (The Ride). The proposal asks voters to renew a property tax for expanded bus services. It's the same tax that voters originally approved in 2014 for 0.7 mills. How much is that? If you own a house worth \$100,000 then you'd pay \$70 each year for this tax.

Candidates

The Democratic Party candidates for Ann Arbor mayor are Jack Eaton and Christopher Taylor. Each of the city's five wards has competition in the

Democratic Primary. Here are the candidates for Ann Arbor City Council:

Ward 1: Ron Ginyard and Jeff Hayner

Ward 2: Kathy Griswold and Kirk Westphal

Ward 3: Julie Grand and Alice Liberson

Ward 4: Graydon Krapohl and Elizabeth Nelson

Ward 5: Ali Ramlawi and Chuck Warpehoski

Most candidates have campaign websites that provide information about their priorities. You also can learn about the candidates at AnnArborVotes.org/the-candidates-aug-2018. The winners of these primary races will be on the ballot in the Nov. 6 general election – the final election of the year!

Absentee ballots

What if you can't make it to the polls on

Online Voter Resources

Michigan.gov/vote

A2Gov.org/elections

Washtenaw.org/elections

AnnArborVotes.org

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Election Day? You can vote by absentee ballot, if you qualify. In Michigan, you can vote absentee if you are over 60 years old, physically unable to go to the polls, out of town on Election Day or for several other reasons. If you live in Ann Arbor, contact the city clerk's office at 734-794-6140 for info about voting absentee.

No matter where you live, be sure to vote on Aug. 7!

Partisan Justice

continued from page 4

In almost all states justices must please some combination of voters and politicians who will determine whether they get or keep their seat on the bench.

Back in the 1980s and 1990s incumbents invariably kept their state court seat. In 1990-1999 there was a paltry \$83.3 million spent in judicial campaigns in the whole country. Starting around the year 2000 the judicial election process heated up. In the next decade, spanning 2000-2009, the judicial spending ante more than doubled to \$206.9 million, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. Special interests, usually attorneys and business interests, were figuring out there was an opportunity to advance their goals through the creation of “palsy-walsy” courts.

How realistic is it to expect a judge to be impartial when ruling on a matter involving a politically sensitive case where one of the litigants is part of the same political party that put up the money that got him elected to his judgeship in the first place?

Do we have a right to expect the judge

to be actually impartial? We sure don't expect him to make campaign promises to donors the way politicians do.

Yet, it sure seems hard to separate partisan leanings from ideology in judicial rulings. It may be that a judge makes a ruling based on his or her long-held personal philosophy, but it is difficult to separate this from partisan loyalty. Maybe we should hold judges to the colloquial standard that used to be applied to U.S. senators: “You can't be a real senator unless you take a man's money and then vote against his interests.”

It is known that in recent years Democratic judges tend to view cases differently than Republican judges. In dealing with voting rights, such as the constitutionality of voter identification laws, Republican judges demonstrate a strong affinity for upholding such state laws and Democratic judges a tendency to strike them down. The Republican judges tend to feel such matters should be decided by the respective legislatures and Democratic judges say it is up to the court to remedy unfair laws.

One interesting observation came from

looking at the voting record of retiring judges – those who no longer depend on campaign dollars. The data showed that in the last years before their retirement the partisan voting is virtually gone. This strongly suggests that the need to raise future campaign funds is a major factor in judges' voting patterns.

The study further illustrated the importance of political dollars to the election of judges. It showed that in the 2013 election cycle the winning justice in 90 percent of the elections was the one who spent the most money on his or her campaign. Is it any wonder that people think that justice is up for sale?


With politics and the judicial system now operating in lock step, it becomes increasingly difficult to expect that the courts will operate in an open and unbiased manner in so many areas that are vital to us.

If unbiased justices were so prevalent, the members of Congress would not fight so hard to get their favorite nominees named to the courts. We only have to look at the fierce fighting that went on before Justice Neil Gorsuch was nominated and eventually named to the

Supreme Court. That will seem like a patty cake compared to what is going to happen with the nomination of Judge Kavanaugh. Even more is at stake with this nomination because it will “tilt” the Court.

How proud President Trump was in saying how many judicial appointments he had made to the federal bench in his first 18 months in office. He didn't say that these openings existed as a result of the Republicans blocking many of President Obama's Democratic nominations while he was in office.

Yet, the majority of citizens still prefer partisan election of judges; of course, that preference goes away when a judge who is a member of another political party is ruling in favor of a litigant favored by that party. Despite this shortcoming in judicial elections, increasingly states are showing preference for choosing justices with a partisan methodology. This country needs more merit-driven justices to put our courts on a more balanced basis.



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United Way Financial Empowerment – setting goals, changing habits and lives

by Payton Watt
U-M Student Contributor

In 2014, United Way established one of the first programs in Washtenaw County to offer free financial coaching and workshops. Today, there is only one other organization, Habitat for Humanity, that offers related services that include one-on-one coaching.

United Way recognized organically the lack of financial literacy programs in the area. AmeriCorps volunteer Marshall Averill was working for United Way on eviction cases but was quickly left without work as the economic recession subsided. Thus, he began to investigate the need for financial literacy programs in the county. From a meeting with many stakeholders, it became apparent that deficiencies in financial literacy were holding people back and United Way had to act. The organization was left with the decision to fund other organizations to provide related work, or to do it themselves. They ultimately chose both.

At the beginning of 2015 – mere months after this decision was made – United Way of Washtenaw County also



A session of a Financial Literacy workshop that United Way did exclusively for Groundcover News vendors and volunteers. (Left to right: Shelley, Pony, Arthur, Will, Shana and Kathy.)

took over the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program. VITA is an IRS-regulated program that provides no-cost tax preparation for individuals making less than \$56,000, and for individuals who have barriers (for example, individuals for whom English is not their first language, and active duty officers). The adoption of this program now gives United Way two

branches within their financial stability programs: financial education and tax assistance.

Currently, the financial education branch operates with one-time classes held at Michigan Works! and workshops for interested organizations. The one-time class covers goal setting, budgeting and credit. During these classes,

Averill emphasizes the importance of goal setting because he has taken the stance that “financial management is more of a behavioral challenge than a numbers challenge.” In other words, he encourages attendees to ask themselves, “Why do I want to make these changes? What is preventing me from living within my budget?”

Averill has found that the topic of credit is one of the most popular workshops offered because attendees can use its helpful strategies immediately that after the session.

The workshops are more in-depth and they often occur in series, with one workshop every two weeks, followed up with individual coaching for workshop participants. These sessions contain activities and interactive pieces to make the experience practical. In addition, registrants are given homework between each session and are encouraged to apply the skills they learned in the previous session. This allows them to test their knowledge and use it on a day-to-day basis.

Groundcover News vendors participate
see UNITED WAY, page 11

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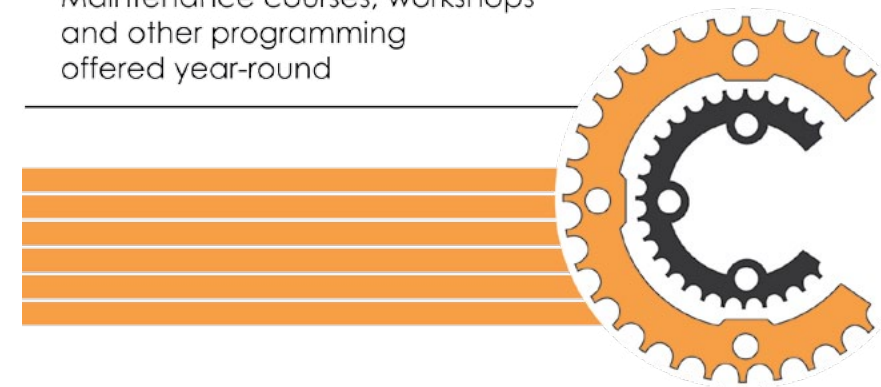
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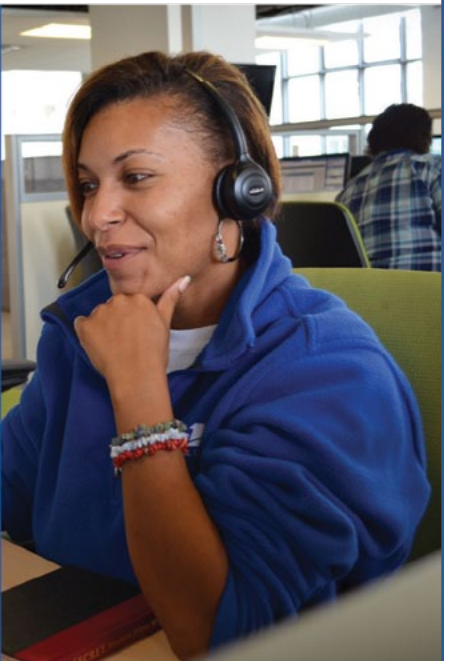
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A waste of money?



by Elizabeth "Lit"
Kurtz
Groundcover
Vendor #159

In a society increasingly divided by haves and have-nots, controversy recently swirled around the announcement by *Forbes Magazine* that Kylie Jenner would be a self-made billionaire by age 21. It might be easy to jump to the conclusion that a person born into the privileged circumstances of Kylie Jenner is not indeed self-made. After all, the very notion of privilege invokes images of individuals who gain success aided by others.

Younger siblings often have to push themselves so as not to be taken for granted or even forgotten. Serena Williams was not even expected to be a tennis competitor and had to volley for that position. One should also consider that children born into privilege have more of an opportunity to enter a world of drugs and be consumed by a partying lifestyle.

But it should not be omitted that Jenner, the youngest member of the Kardashian family, had what so many women lack. That is the gift of a support system – a sisterhood in the truest sense of the word: women who had gone before her capitalizing on social media, providing a virtual template for her success. She mimicked what her sisters had done, but did it better. She was privileged to cut her teeth on their social media savvy.

The August 2018 *Forbes* issue, show-

casing America's billionaire women, recognizes that the path to success is different for each person, and that not everyone on the list had the same beginnings. Certainly not Oprah Winfrey, who started life in the racist South having to battle the crippling effects of racism as well as the spiritually depleting wounds of childhood sexual abuse, while also lacking a close sisterhood of role models to help her on her journey. So, whether from the financially verdant soil of the Kardashian clan or from the drive needed to defy the odds of poverty, each individual had to make her mark independently. At the end of the day, regardless of one's trajectory each woman on the *Forbes* list stands on her own merit as being self-made.

What is disconcerting, however, is that Jenner's success highlights a coming-of-age demographic willing to spend billions of their disposable income on visions of specialized makeup lines created by one of their peers while others in their demographic can barely survive.

Those who have been alert to the changing dynamic of poverty might not be surprised by a 2015 article from *The Brown Center Chalkboard* that states, "the income achievement gap is now larger than the racial achievement gap."

Furthermore, Jenner's accomplishments might be more impressive had she attained a college degree while building her business empire, or even received one in place of it. While many have achieved success without a formal education, often it was due to lack of opportunity. Instead Jenner is an icon for an emerging demographic fascinated by pop culture while showing little attention to the broader perspec-



Kylie Jenner, one of the 60 richest women featured recently in *Forbes Magazine*.

tive that a formal higher education provides.

And the young business mogul's philanthropic pursuits show little variance from other celebrities who invest in other continents and not in the systemic issues of poverty which wreak havoc in our country. While Kylie's older sister, Kim Kardashian, threw her weight behind a noble social justice issue, the younger Kylie Jenner perhaps has not yet matured enough to recognize complex issues such as prison reform and least of all the devastation of economic disparity.

To place perspective on the power of monetary investment, only a fraction of Jenner's billion-dollar fortune – 50 million dollars to be precise, an amount

that could have been raised via Seattle's recently passed and then-revoked business head tax – would enable the city to build close to 600 affordable housing units to combat its high population of homeless people.

There is little question that financial investment improves and saves lives. For this message to be lost on a multi-million-dollar industry of youths willing to spend \$29 on liquid lipstick is an alarming indicator of how a new generation may interminably widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

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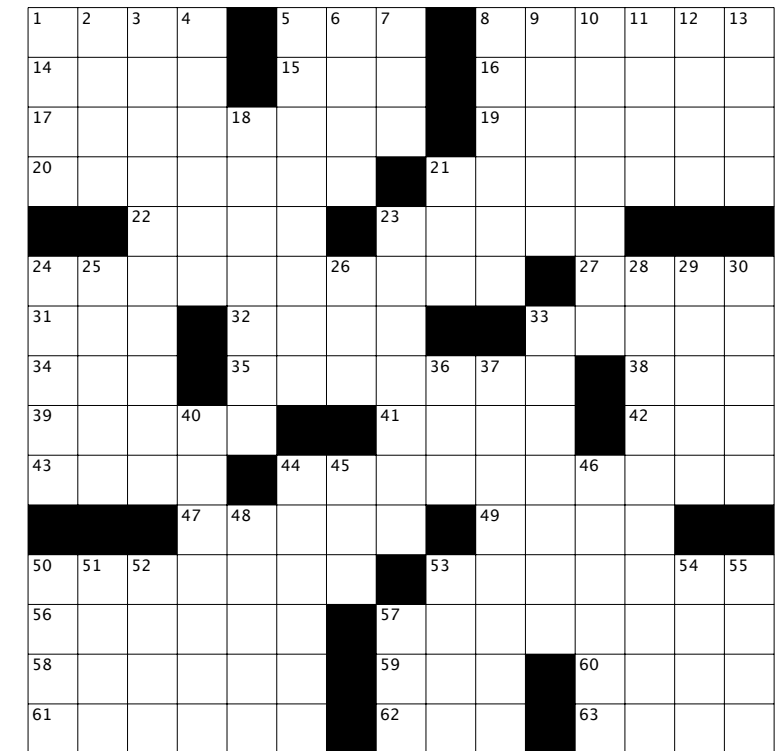
Five in a Row Peter A. Collins

ACROSS

- Bygone bird
- Mike's partner in candy
- Procure
- Biological transmitter
- Veteran's Day mo.
- Subtlety
- Place for suckers?
- "Young Frankenstein" star Gene
- Reaction producer
- Ari's wife
- Capone nabbers
- Shepherd sounds
- Brisbane's state
- Part of MCAT
- Google find
- One of the "Surf City" singing duo
- Carried
- Have a bug
- Mesopotamian kingdom of antiquity
- Cyclotron particle
- British nobles
- Dionne, to Whitney
- Magnon
- One of Noah's sons
- Colorful river bird
- Deserves
- Those, in Spanish
- Sharp
- Unsophisticated
- Result of reproduction
- What the first parts of 17-, 21-, 24-, 44-, and 50-Across form
- Keep the beat, in a way
- "Annabel Lee" poet
- Useless
- Like a sauna
- Word between the two "Surf City" singers
- Cry of despair

DOWN

- Word with big or raw
- United farm workers?
- "Wait! I know this!"
- Prompt



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- Makes mad
- German cathedral city, to locals
- One who raised Cain?
- Leader's exhortation
- Cutlass maker, once
- Addresses
- The Beatles' "___ Love Her"
- Frosty treat
- Claudius successor
- Some may be hidden
- One of the "Surf City" singing duo
- Some fig trees
- Squats' targets
- Heep of trouble?
- Viva-Vegas connector
- "Love Story" author
- Sleep soundly?
- Character
- Cuban head before Castro
- Throw on the floor?
- Gathered
- Retired, as a female professor
- ___ Kremer
- Business mag
- It may be on the tip of one's tongue
- Crosswise, on a boat
- Play divisions
- Eccentric oldster
- Foil alternative
- Loads
- Branch of Islam
- Place stops: Abbr.
- Tube where sweaters hang?



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Remembering my sister, Crystal Marie Ludwig



by Tabitha L.
Groundcover
Vendor #360

I don't really know how to start and this is hard for me to write. So first let me say R.I.P. sissy – you will forever be missed but never forgotten, I promise you that.

Crystal lived a very hard life. From the day she was born she was fighting for her life because our mom had her over three months early. She was so little she had to wear baby doll clothes. Then at the age of two-and-a-half she became a big sister to me.

When she was just five years old she was already raising me due to our parents' drug and alcohol addictions. One day she almost burnt down the house (at the age of five) because she was try-

ing to cook for me. I was crying because I was hungry and she couldn't get nobody up to feed me, so she decided to do it herself.

It was me and my sister against the world from that day forward. She was the one I always looked up to, and as long as she was around I always knew I would be taken care of and safe. No matter what happened in life I always had my sister. When we became a little older and she started hanging out with her friends, I would tag along with her.

Even though she didn't always want her little sister there, she would always give in and end up letting me go with her.

I always went everywhere with her, so when she would move in with our mom I was right there with her, moving in also. And when she would go back to our grandma's house, I was once again with her. I always knew that I was safe if I was with my sister because she would never ever let anything happen to me. I grew up my whole life being known as,

"Oh, you're Crystal's sister."

Yes, we was sisters and we did act like sisters, so we didn't always get along. We did have our fights and arguments and, yes, we did do messed-up stuff to each other, but at the end of the day she was my blood and my big sister.

She was way more to me than just my sister. She was – and still is – my best friend, my mom, my protector, my heart and so much more to me.

Crystal was an amazing woman. She was a sister, a daughter, a granddaughter, a niece, a friend, a fiancée, and most importantly she was a mother to five beautiful children who she loved more than anything.

The hardest thing that I have ever had to do is say goodbye to my sister. I never would have thought in a million years that I would have to go through something like this at such a young age. We was supposed to get through all this together and fight this demon together.

When I say me and my sister did everything together, I mean we did *everything* together. I mean we even did jail time together. We also had our first child in the same year. She had her daughter in the beginning of the year and I had my son at the end of the year, but they was still born in the same year.

When I came out to the street life back in 2016, my sister was in jail and my dad told her what I was doing. She wrote me a letter begging me to stop and not go down that path, but I didn't listen to her. All I did was cry and then fold it up and put it in the backseat of my car.

Not too long after that I ended up getting into a relationship with – come to find out – one of my sister's exes. But I went to go and visit her and told her who I was with and gave her a phone number so she could get a hold of me.

When she got out of jail, instead of stay-

see SISTER, page 11

Remembering my sister

continued from page 10

ing on the road to recovery she came back to the streets to protect me. She said that she wouldn't be able to live with herself knowing that I was in the streets without her. So, she came back out here and made it known to everyone that crossed our path that I was her sister and if they messed with me then they had to deal with her.

Me and Crystal have been through a lot together, from childhood to adulthood. We have had our ups and downs, but I can say that no matter what, when I needed her she was always there. All I had to do was say, sissy I need you, and she was there.

I also want to make it very clear to everyone that she was clean. There was

NO DRUGS found in her system when she was killed. I know how hard it was for her but she was fighting every day.

I will never forget the last day that I seen her. She was fighting so hard to stay clean and it makes me feel so good to know that she pushed through the cravings she was having that day. I am very proud of my sister. That's the reason why I'm going to continue my fight on the road of recovery: to make her proud of me the way I am proud of her. My sister is the strongest woman I will ever know.

Life is going to be hard without her, I already know that, but I also know that she wouldn't want me to ever give up. She would want me to move forward and keep fighting so that's what I am going to do.



Crystal Ludwig (above) cared for and protected her sister Tabitha until passing away last month. Both girls with their mother (upper right) and Tabitha leans on Crystal (bottom right) as their cousin April looks on.

Creating second-chance jobs for people in recovery



by Kevin Spangler
Groundcover
Vendor #307

After years of run-ins with the law, painful addictions and unmanaged ADD, I was at the end of my rope. Once I received the news that I was becoming the father of a beautiful baby boy, I became 100 percent dedicated to turning my life around. While living in a homeless shelter in Ann Arbor, I worked four jobs and saved every penny I could.

On March 6, 2016, I bought my first pedicab and hit the streets of Ann Arbor. Accepting donations for rides around town, I was earning a decent living and knew that this needed to grow. Over the next year and a half, Boober grew into a fleet of 17 pedicabs that operate year-round. As a way of giving back to the community, we hire employees who are in recovery and people who need a second chance. Boober also provides work-

shops to our employees for developing life skills so they can continue to grow and succeed in life. We offer special event services such as weddings, pub crawls and corporate parties, and partner with local businesses to provide a mobile advertising platform.

Amazing things are happening at Boober Tours! We are once again expanding, and are excited to add garden care to Boober's list of services, creating more second-chance jobs for people in recovery! I recently met a woman who shares the same goals in helping others change their lives. Teaming up with Ashley Raub, we have formed the gardening division. She is the owner of a gardening business in the Metro-Detroit area and a certified personal trainer studying for her nutritionist certification. Together we are working to develop a self-improvement program designed not only for people in recovery, but for anyone looking to create a better life for themselves.

God Keep Us

by Chris Splash
Groundcover Contributor

Forever I procrastinate
I may be already too late
time our most sacred unit of measure
every second so precious
too valuable to waste
Hail Mary full of grace
Father I pray for strength
to do better
'fore I go stiff as board
light as feather
and they carry me to the gates
hearts are in the balance
our deeds they carry weight
in the eye of the storm
I see the challenge
never waiver in the faith
for tranquil seas and sunny weather
do not a sailor break
violent waves and rain-soaked days
might wreck the boat
but stay afloat
God will keep you safe.

Dream

by Chris Splash

Why not me? i'm me.
Endangered, i am only one
And none can be me
So it shall ever be
When i am as capable as any
Why wait for another
to realize my dream
If i never learn the meaning
behind things seen and unseen
rest assured it won't be for lack of effort
what is meant to be will be
searching for destiny
i stumble i fall
walk and i crawl
give you my all
draw out the best of me
what is success
without pain and duress
what is this heart for
banging my chest
these are signs
to open my eyes
and yes i will survive
no matter the test
i remain truly blessed

United Way financial

continued from page 6

ed in this workshop series throughout the past two months. Vendors received 10 free papers each session as an additional incentive to attend. Furthermore, if vendors completed certain tasks, attended all sessions, completed all homework, and participated in individual financial coaching, then they became eligible for the Groundcover matched-savings program. Overall, the vendors and volunteers have both gained valuable insight about strategies for saving money efficiently.

Aside from one-time events and workshops, Averill also provides one-on-one coaching for interested individuals. Again, he emphasizes goal setting. As a coach, this takes the form of asking his clients questions, rather than telling them what to do. This includes highlighting the questions individuals should be asking themselves. He states that many individuals believe they have to take a monumental step in order to see a change in their financial statements. Averill debunks this notion and focuses on small action steps that individuals can take within the next 48 hours to help their credit score, live within their budget and simply set realistic and achievable goals.

In the future, Averill states that United Way will continue funding small and innovative programs that provide related financial services. United Way hopes to hire two more financial coaches that will be free or low-cost to the public. He hopes that the next step is "to convene

the Washtenaw Financial Stability Coalition, a collection of many organizations that either do, or would like to do, this type of work as part of their mission."

The Coalition is currently working on a marketing campaign to unveil themselves to the community. They seek to undermine the stigma around accessing any type of financial literacy program and talking about personal finances.

Averill finds that "it does not matter how much or little money someone has; they will often spend it all." He advocates for all individuals to get involved in financial literacy courses – even you!

To get more information about the programs and upcoming events at Michigan Works!, go to uwwashtenaw.org/financialstabilityindividuals.



Some Groundcover participants in the United Way Financial Literacy workshop pose with coach Marshall Averill. (Left to right): Susan, Will, Emanuel, Marshall, Pony, Shelly, Morgan and Shana.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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Grilled halibut

by Elizabeth Bauman
Groundcover Contributor

2 tablespoons melted butter
2 tablespoons honey
½ lemon, juiced
2 teaspoons soy sauce
½ teaspoon pepper
2 cloves minced garlic
1 pound fresh halibut

Mix first 6 ingredients in a small mixing bowl. Brush on both sides of the halibut. Preheat grill until it is sizzling hot (medium-high). Place fish skin side down and grill for 2 minutes on medium high and then reduce heat of grill to medium. Continue grilling with skin side down for an additional 4 minutes. Flip

and continue grilling for another 5 to 6 minutes. When done, fish should be easily flaked with a fork.

Serve with fresh-steamed or grilled vegetables for a healthy, quick dinner.



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